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Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

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L I N C O L N M E M O R I A L S

"Lincoln Memorials" is a rather large subject because there are countless memorials to this beloved American; many located in other countries than our own United States.

Webster's dictionary tells us that a memorial is --

"Anything, ^{like} ~~as~~ a monument, intended to preserve the memory of a person or event."

Time allotted does not permit even a mere listing of the memorials to Lincoln; memorials that include tombs, monuments, statues, buildings, parks, markers, shrines--even interstate trails and national highways.

The proper length of a discussion of this subject reminds one of the old anecdote. When someone asked Lincoln how long a man's legs should be, Lincoln replied: "Long enough to reach the ground."

Likewise, it is probably better to keep our feet on the ground and discuss the outstanding memorials rather than to spend too much time on the lesser monuments and memorials, many placed in historic spots, conspicuous because of some relation to Lincoln's life.

Except as we try to pay our respects to this great man, it might seem presumptions to refer to man-made memorials when Lincoln himself left to posterity his greatest memorial--the now famous Gettysburg address,

which has inspired and lifted the ideals of freedom-loving people everywhere, since it was delivered over eighty years ago.

If no other Lincoln memorial is considered, this masterpiece will suffice to commemorate the vision and foresight of this man who had "malice towards none; charity for all."

Probably the greatest memorial to Lincoln would be for every American to memorize and activate the immortal words: ^{To quote only} (Quoting a portion of the address):

"In a larger sense, we cannot dedicate--we cannot consecrate--we cannot hallow--this ground. The brave men living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. This world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but, it cannot ever forget what they did here.

"It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us--that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this Nation,

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(under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

In those words we have the greatest of all Lincoln memorials---words that will inspire millions long after marble monuments have crumbled to dust. As we take brief glances at the man-made memorials, it may be well to bear in mind Lincoln's address which is equally applicable today when we have so much dissension at home and abroad; truly, we can all "highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

(When one attempts to discuss Lincoln memorials, it is necessary to have a starting point. What would be more appropriate than to begin right where he was born, and then to follow the Lincoln Trail as it winds across Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois ^{and then to} with its terminus in the Nation's Capitol at Washington, D.C.

To all of us who live in the middle-west, and especially St. Louisans who are so near several outstanding Lincoln memorials, they take on special significance; so easily accessible to all of us interested in visiting them personally.

(It is only a day's drive from St. Louis to Nolin Creek, about 2 1/2 miles South of Hodgenville, where on the most sacred spot in Kentucky soil,

February 12, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born 138 years ago; the son of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who *for* several years lived in the log cabin which has since become so famous.

On this site is Abraham Lincoln National Park, comprising 110 acres. The Lincoln Farm Association bought the site in 1906 and began the erection of a beautiful granite structure in which to house the log cabin in which Lincoln was born.

The cabin is 12 feet wide and 17 feet long; 11 feet from the floor to the eaves. The memorial building ~~for~~^{•X} which Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone in 1909, the centennial of Lincoln's birth, is of Connecticut granite, lined with Tennessee marble. Its inside dimensions are 44 feet in width, 34 feet in depth, and 45 feet in height. The Lincoln association transferred title to the United States in 1916, and later, in 1933, the property was placed under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

This memorial has been described as "the most impressive shrine in the entire United States." As one walks up the steps and enters the beautiful structure, the humble log cabin testifies that however lowly or obscure one's birthplace or early surroundings

may be, America offers opportunity to rise above all hardships and to receive the love, acclaim and approval of the entire world.

It might be well for some of our present-day malcontents who preach foreign isms to be compelled to make the pilgrimage to the Lincoln log cabin shrine in the Blue Grass state.

It is an interesting coincidence that both opposing Presidents in office during the War Between the States were born in the same state and in the same section. An obelisk, 351 feet high at Fairview, in Todd County, marks the place where Jefferson Davis was born in 1808.

The Lincoln memorial near Hogdenville, Kentucky, is the beginning of what is known as the Lincoln National Memorial Trail, reaching approximately 600 miles to Springfield, Illinois, and the nearby reconstructed town of New Salem; the trail traversing the route followed by Abraham Lincoln and his parents in their trek westward.

This Trail is marked with numerous memorials and markers, only a few of which will be described at this time. The significance of these memorials is better indicated by a review of the incidents in Lincoln's life.

In the fall of 1816, Thomas Lincoln, Abraham's father, decided to move to Indiana. Leaving their Kentucky home, they proceeded through the then comparative wilderness, suffering many privations, to a point near Hawsville on the Ohio River. Crossing by ferry, they landed near Cannelton, Indiana. From the ferry, they journeyed to a point near Gentryville where the father built a log cabin.

On this home site, amid scenery for which Southern Indiana is still famous, the State of Indiana has created Nancy Hanks State Park, and a beautiful monument erected by the Studebaker family, marks the tomb of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, Abraham's mother. Her passing is said by some to have been the greatest sorrow in Abraham Lincoln's life. In later years, he uttered this oft-quoted tribute:

"All I am, and all I hope to be,
I owe to my sainted mother."

To this early maternal influence one must credit the statement in later years when he said:

"I can see how it might be possible for man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he can look up into the heavens and say there is no God."

In 1830, when Abraham was 21 years old, the father decided to move farther west---this time to

Illinois. They crossed the Wabash River at Vincennes, Indiana, where the beautiful Lincoln Memorial Bridge and monument now add to the many other interesting features of this historic town on "The Banks of the Wabash."

Lincoln's westward march included the present towns of Charleston and Mattoon to a point on the Sangamon River about ten miles west of Decatur. Here their first Illinois home was built by the Lincolns and Abe sought odd jobs at farming--studying all the while--every book he could borrow.

At this point Lincoln became acquainted with a Mr. Offutt of New Salem, Illinois, and decided to locate there. For a while he conducted a store with a man named Berry, but it was a failure and left him heavily in debt. Most of us are familiar with his romance with Ann Rutledge, her sudden death causing a sorrow over which Lincoln always grieved.

At New Salem the visitor now finds a unique and increasingly popular Lincoln shrine---a most curious and impressive historical exhibit---the reconstructed village as it stood in the time of Lincoln. Each of the stores and cabins have been reconstructed and furnished in an exact replica of the furnishings of that early period. The State of Illinois has made

this a State Park, made beautiful recreation grounds and parking facilities. (Only about 120 miles from St. Louis--over good hard roads).

In 1837, Lincoln moved to Springfield, the city which was to be the site of his greatest progress politically. The only home Lincoln ever owned, the residence at 8th and Jackson, in Springfield, has become a famous Lincoln shrine---kept practically the same as when the Lincolns occupied it, although much of the original furnishings were disposed of when the Lincolns moved to Washington. (In 1840 Lincoln had married Mary Todd from Lexington, Kentucky).

In Springfield, in Oakridge Cemetery, one finds the greatest of all Lincoln Shrines--the world famous Lincoln Tomb. At this tomb, rulers of nations, distinguished statesmen, Presidents of the United States and humble men and women in all walks of life, pay sincere homage to Lincoln. This tomb contains the Cenotaph in which are the flags of the states where the direct line of the generations of Lincolns have lived.

Also, within the tomb are nine four-foot bronze statuettes depicting various stages in Lincoln's life--all by famous sculptors--The titles of these

statuettes are:--

"Lincoln" --- by Daniel Chester French

"Lincoln--The Ranger" --- by Fred M. Torrey

"Lincoln-in the Blackhawk War"--by Leonard Crunnelle

"Lincoln on Circuit" -- by Torrey

"Lincoln Park" -- by Augustus St. Gaudens

"Lincoln the Debater" -- by Crunnelle

"Lincoln's Birthplace" -- by A. A. Weinman

"Lincoln the Lawyer" -- by Lorado Taft

"Lincoln" at Lincoln, Nebr. -- by Chester French

In addition the tomb contains bronze tablets of various addresses by Lincoln.

Time does not permit even a brief description of the many monuments and statues which have been erected in many cities as memorials to Lincoln.

The most majestic of all these Lincoln Memorials and the one which welcomes a larger number of visitors than all of the other Lincoln shrines combined, is in the Nation's Capitol. Rivaling any memorial effort ever attempted by man, it stands in Washington to register the affection in which Lincoln is held by the masses. Nearly ten million have visited this memorial since the Government began counting in 1938. And, all have reflected reverence. Many kneel

silently in the shadow of the statue, unashamed in their public expression of humility and hope. Nobody enters without taking off his hat; few leave without a spiritual lift.

A description of this one memorial alone would justify a separate paper. It is impossible here properly to portray its conception, magnitude, the murals and inscriptions, its dedication, the mirrored lagoon and other outstanding features.

Probably the most impressive feature within the memorial is the statue of Lincoln, by the master sculptor, Daniel Chester French. This statue literally dominates the entire interior atmosphere of the building, in much the same manner that the memorial itself overshadows Potomac Park and its environs.

The statue represents a long, victorious struggle against red tape. Congress gave an official O. K. for the project two years after Lincoln's death. But, it was not until fifty-five years later that the memorial was dedicated. Total cost was \$2,940,000. But only \$100,000 went into the statue, its dominating figure.

The statue, showing Lincoln seated, is 19 feet in both height and width. If Lincoln were standing, the figure would be 28 feet high. The pedestal on

which it rests is 10 feet high. The statue is impressively illuminated both night and day.

In this connection it is said that the sculptor made and discarded sketch after sketch. At last, achieving a figure which satisfied his basic requirements, he had an eight foot plaster model made. He sent it to the Piccirilli Brothers, who carved the statue from 28 blocks of marble. French became so infused with the spirit of his creation that he worked himself into a state of exhaustion and finally went to Europe.

When he returned to view his statue for the first time, his heart broke. It was as close to perfection as he dared hope. The lighting, however, came from every angle but the right one. Instead of appearing deeply human as he was, Lincoln looked like a ghastly gargoyle. Right then French started a crusade to have his masterpiece properly lighted. It took him two years--but he won.

Guards are continually impressed with the brooding spirit of the statue. They like the story of the little boy, who started to climb the pedestal.

"We must not do anything undignified," his mother chided him gently. "This is a holy place."

"I didn't mean to be undignified, Mommy," the boy replied. "I was just going to climb up in his lap; he looks so lonesome."

To soften and mellow the interior of the memorial, murals are used. Three years were required to create these paintings. Jules Guerin, the artist, alone painted the two pieces of canvas which measure sixty feet long and twelve feet high. There are 48 figures which stand about 8 1/2 feet high. Six groups typify in allegory the ideals in the life of Lincoln.

The figures face the East, and in the light of the early rising sun are exceptionally majestic and compelling. As already stated, countless thousands of people reverently visit this memorial every year, carrying away with them the memory of a great man, fittingly placed in an edifice worthy of the Nation's esteem.

On the West Wall, directly over the statue, this inscription may be observed:

"In This Temple

As in the Hearts of the People,

For whom he Saved the Union,

The Memory of Abraham Lincoln

Is Enshrined Forever."

